Handi-Lift Advisory Council March 16, 2011 Minutes

This meeting of the Handi-Lift Advisory Council met at the Hood Building on South President Street.

Attending this meeting were Sam Tensley, General Manager of JATRAN, Dewayne Cheatham, Director of Operations of JATRAN, Karen Robinson (JATRAN) the Rev. Sam Gleese (City of Jackson ADA Coordinator), Napoleon Campbell (Vice Chair), Jason Bunch, Lee Cole, Namon Hulitt Jr., Kay Hardage, Esq., of Disability Rights Mississippi, Eddie Turner, Dr. Christy Dunaway (LIFE), James Thompson, and Dr. Scott M. Crawford (Chair).

The meeting opened at 1:10pm. After brief introductions and signing of the attendance list, Karen Robinson read the January 19th Minutes. Attorney Hardage suggested that a paragraph break be placed to make the document more readable. With that one correction, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Ms. Dunaway asked about the reference to Logisticare, a Medicare transportation broker, in last month's minutes. There was some discussion about Logisticare referring large numbers of clients to JATRAN's Handi-Lift program for primarily medical appointments, that are otherwise being paid for through Medicaid transportation funds. Both Mr. Tensley and Dr. Crawford noted that this was brought to the attention of Russell Thatcher of TranSystems and David Knight of the Department of Justice. The understanding is that JATRAN is allowed and even encouraged to negotiate higher fees from Logisticare when these are deemed "agency trips". Mr. Tensley said that he was working to make that happen.

New Business: There was a meeting of the City Council's Transportation Committee in which an ad hoc transportation committee was authorized to make recommendations to improve JATRAN's financial efficiency, among other things through route consolidation and adjustments. The Council asked for two members of Jacksons' disabled community to be appointed to serve on this ad hoc committee, one who uses a wheelchair and one who does not. Nominations were opened. Dr. Crawford was nominated for the wheelchair user's slot with Jason Bunch as an alternate. Both were approved unanimously. There were two nominations for the other slot: Lee Cole and Napoleon Campbell. The vote was four to three in favor of Ms. Cole. Mr. Campbell declined to serve as alternate, but Mr. Eddie Turner volunteered and was approved by acclamation.

Old Business: Dr. Crawford noted that March 30th will mark the first anniversary of the signing of the Consent Decree in the case of Crawford et al. v. Jackson. In light of this milestone, he emailed Traci Brent and Sam Gleese last week with a number of questions and asked that a representative of the City be available with the answers at today's meeting. Mr. Tensley said that Ms. Brent forwarded the questions to the City's Legal

Department, but was unable to attend today's meeting. There was no one representing the City of Jackson at today's meeting but Mr. Tensley offered to answer those questions that he could.

How many Handi-Lift vehicles do we have on the street now, and how many did we have in March 2010 (just before the Consent Decree was finalized)? Mr. Tensley answered that the number remains unchanged since this time last year (eight paratransit vehicles during weekdays, and two on Saturday).

How many reservationists/dispatchers (now, and before the Consent Decree)? Mr. Tensley indicated that they had one full-time and one part time reservationist/dispatcher last year and recently added an additional full-time person.

Will you retrieve a month by month number of "denied" trips (trips you couldn't accommodate because of limited resources) to share with the committee members? Mr. Tensley indicated that this data was available to the plaintiffs in documentation submitted to Mr. Thatcher at TranSystems (the Consent Decree Monitor). Since Ms. Brent was unavailable, the chairperson took the liberty of looking up and reporting this information to the Council:

Trips Provided	Trips Denied
2308	No Data
2291	33
2160	42
1497	80
2086	460
2071	174
2400	246
2022	195
1773	252
	2308 2291 2160 1497 2086 2071 2400 2022

There was some question about the obvious "spike" in trip denials during the August time period. Mr. Tensley explained that the monitor's visit in July resulted in better reporting of trip denials and that August was when Logisticare started referring its clientele' to the HandiLift department. There was further discussion about whether or not to count Logisticare's Medicaid trips as "ADA trips" for purposes of the Consent Decree. Mr. Tensley said that he has consulted with Mr. Thatcher at TransSystems and with Mr. Knight at DOJ and they will no longer be counted as "trip denials" since they qualify as "agency trips".

The City budgeted 4 new Handi-Lift vehicles for FY-2011. Why haven't those vehicles been ordered yet? Why weren't they ordered in October, 2010? Mr. Tensley said that he signed an order for four new paratransit buses yesterday, but that it will likely be six months before they arrive. Dr. Crawford expressed disappointment that the City chose to wait so long to order these vehicles, so much so that it will likely be

fiscal year 2012 before they are actually in use. "It would have shown better faith to order these vehicles at the earliest possible time (last October)."

When was the City required to comply with increasing capacity on Handi-Lift to provide reliable next-day service requests? Since no one from the City of Jackson attended this meeting, the chairperson quoted Item 43 of the Consent Decree: "September 30, 2010."

When does the City ACTUALLY INTEND to comply with this provision? On what date?

This item remains outstanding as no one from the City attended this meeting.

Regarding the new software and computers, Mr. Tensley indicated that the City decided to use *Route Match* software but that the contract was currently under review of the legal department and has yet to be "executed." It is unknown when this will happen, and no one from the legal department was there to comment.

The next item was the HandiLift Policies and Procedures Manual. There was a meeting last week (March 8th) at JATRAN attended by several members of this council, including Sam Gleese, Lee Cole, Napoleon Campbell, and Scott Crawford. Mr. Cheatham indicated that he received the revisions Dr. Crawford sent and that he made the revisions requested by Mr. Knight (DOJ). It has been sent to the City's Legal Department for review.

Dr. Crawford indicated that the bus operators are doing better at understanding when seatbelts are required (paratransit) versus optional (fixed route).

Mr. Chetham and Mr. Tensley asked the Council what they recommend regarding when to deploy ramps for people using walkers: should it be done always or only by request. Dr. Dunaway said that she feels it is best to always **offer** to deploy the ramp and do what the passenger prefers. The emphasis though is on the bus operator offering rather than waiting to be asked.

Mr. Hulitt took this opportunity to point out that bus operators are often reluctant to "kneel" the bus when people with gait problems (or use canes for instance) try to board/alight the bus. Mr. Tensley said that there is an ongoing effort to get their operators to kneel the buses whenever people board/alight, not merely those with disabilities. Dr. Crawford asked what motivation the drivers have <u>against</u> kneeling the buses. Mr. Tensley said he believes they think it wastes too much time. All agreed that this was not actually true, that it only takes a matter of a few seconds to kneel or raise a bus. However, it is proving difficult to modify old habits on the part of some of the operators.

Open Discussion: Mr. Bunch raised an issue that occurred last Saturday (March 12th) on a paratransit trip. He reported that his bus operator told him to stand with his walker while riding the lift when he tried to explain that he preferred to sit (his walker has a

seat). Mr. Tensley said he would look up the operator's name and council her to let the clients decide how best to ride the lift (seated or standing).

Mr. Cheatham asked whether there was a standardized direction to ride a lift (facing toward or away from the bus). Dr. Dunaway responded that no, there is no requirement to sit or stand facing forward or backwards, and that certain wheelchairs and situations will require different orientations. Dr. Crawford concurred, adding that it's best to ask the client what works for them.

Finally, Mr. Cheatham asked about the use of brakes on wheelchairs as they ride a lift. Dr. Crawford and Dr. Dunaway agreed that power chairs should be turned off (thereby locking the chair) and manual chair users should be encouraged to lock their brakes, but of course, the ADA does not require the use of brakes. The consensus of this Council though is to highly encourage their use while on a lift.

Announcements: There will be a "Connect 1 Summit" for emergency first responders May 12th-13th at the Mississippi Convention Center.

There will be a "Health Fair" this Friday (March 18th), sponsored by the ARC of Mississippi from 10am to 3pm at the Jackson Medical Mall

LIFE of Mississippi is sponsoring "Expotential 2011 – The Art of LIFE" on March 31st from 6-8pm at the Mississippi Craft Center, 950 Rice Road, Ridgeland, MS, 39157. The event will feature original artwork by Mississippians with Disabilities.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at about 2:30pm.

These Minutes were prepared by Scott M. Crawford, Ph.D., Chairperson and approved at the May 18, 2011 meeting.